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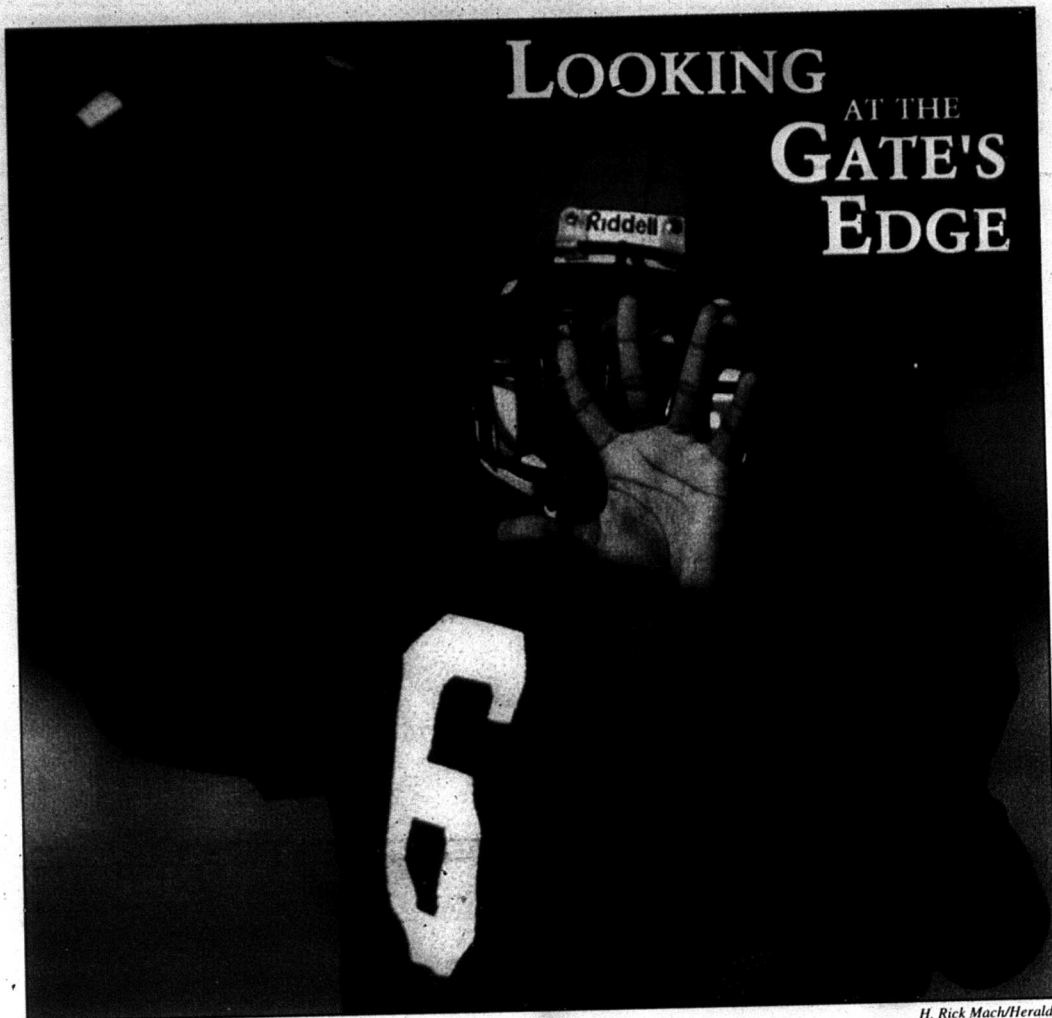
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LOOKING AT THE GATE'S EDGE



H. Rick Mach/Herald

Quarterback Jason Johnson will start in Saturday's game against Tennessee-Martin as the Toppers plan to put more passing in their offense.

Toppers rush to enter Gateway on winning note

By BRIAN MOORE
Herald reporter

Bobby Sippio eyed the kickoff and got set to take off downfield with it during Western football's first scrimmage two weeks ago.

Sippio returned five kickoffs and 17 punts last season, so fielding the kick shouldn't have been a problem.

Smack.

Just before the ball fell into Sippio's arms, teammate Mel Mitchell collided with him. The two stumbled to the ground and the ball hit the turf untouched.

It was perhaps a meaningless preseason miscommunication, but in another way, it may have shown just how close this team has become.

According to coaches and players, this Hilltopper football team is about unity. Besides being teammates, they're friends. They're together on and off the field. They share common goals and are motivated, in many cases, by the same factors.

"Off the field, we're one big group," Sippio said. "It's like big team, little meeting. That's how I look at it. I feel like everybody's out here to have fun, and that's what we're doing."

Beyond all the fun is the gate's edge.

Next season, Western will join the Gateway Conference, the most proven Division 1-AA football conference in the country. After spending only one year in the Ohio Valley Conference, school administrators of the league voted this summer for a new policy requiring its members to be affiliated in all sports.

But Western didn't consider that offer. President Gary Ransdell and Athletics Director Wood Selig quickly looked for entrance into the Gateway after learning of the new policy. They did not want to forfeit affiliation with the Sun Belt Conference in other sports.

As a result, this will be the second and final year in the conference the team thought was its home. Head coach Jack Harbaugh has said many times his team belongs in the OVC. The conference makes the most geographical sense, he said, and the operating budgets of the member institutions are similar.

In the Gateway, football programs have an average annual budget of \$1.7 million. Western currently has a \$1.1 million budget, which is similar to other OVC schools.

Finding the money and a way to compete on the field with some of Division 1-AA's top programs are

among the challenges at the gate's edge.

But those challenges aren't the topic of everyday conversation around the Topper locker room or the practice fields.

"We've gone through three weeks of camp and I really haven't heard it discussed much," Harbaugh said. "This season has been no different in preparation than in past years. Right now, we're focusing on this year and making the best of this season."

A potentially close race for the OVC championship could be in the cards.

Tennessee State, who knocked off Western 28-21 last year, finished the season with a 7-0 record in the conference. Murray State finished second at 5-2 and Western and Eastern tied with 4-3 records.

Western was picked by OVC coaches to finish fourth in the league this year. All of the top four teams from last year return a strong core of starters.

"Because it's so close, you've got to be on your game every week. You can't take a game off, a quarter off or even a series off or you'd be put at risk as it relates to the championship," Harbaugh said.

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Western Football Depth Chart

Defense

Cornerback
Joseph Jefferson
6-0, 195 lb., Jr.
23 - Carl Birts
5-10, 165 lb., So.



Right end
Rocco Dibenedetto
6-2, 230 lb., So.
98 - Earl Miller
6-4, 245 lb., Jr.



Linebacker
Jon Drummond
5-11, 225 lb., Sr.
18 - Erik Dandy
6-0, 205 lb., Fr.



Free safety
Mel Mitchell
6-1, 205 lb., Jr.
26 - Josh Waiters
5-11, 195 lb., So.



Right tackle
Arthur Wilson
6-0, 285 lb., Jr.
95 - Richard Gervais
6-2, 280 lb., So.



Linebacker
Melvin Wisham
6-2, 225 lb., Sr.
48 - Karl Maslowski
6-1, 225 lb., Fr.



Strong safety
Kyle Moffatt
5-10, 195 lb., Jr.
1 - Brian Lowder
5-8, 170 lb., Fr.



Left tackle
Randall Johnson
6-1, 265 lb., Jr.
99 - Paul Marshall
6-1, 320 lb., Sr.



Linebacker
Sherrad Coates
6-2, 210 lb., Jr.
32 - Hayes Thomas
5-10, 220 lb., Sr.



Cornerback
Jeremy Chandler
5-9, 170 lb., Fr.
4 - Mel Mitchell
6-1, 205 lb., Jr.



Left end
Patrick Reynolds
6-3, 230 lb., So.
56 - Kevin Goff
6-2, 240 lb., Fr.



Offense



Right tackle
Marcus Caldwell
6-1, 280 lb., Jr.
69 - Jason Jacobs
6-1, 280 lb., Sr.



Right guard
Derek Forster
6-3, 290 lb., Sr.
73 - Eric Ravellette
6-1, 290 lb., So.



Center
Joe Guinane
6-1, 260 lb., Jr.
75 - Ryan Thomas
6-3, 285 lb., Fr.



Left guard
Chris Price
5-11, 280 lb., Jr.
77 - Joe Washington
6-3, 285 lb., Fr.



Left tackle
Daniel Withrow
6-3, 265 lb., Fr.
90 - Kinnus Paul
6-4, 260 lb., Fr.



Tight end
James Richie
5-11, 210 lb., Sr.
85 - Tommy Crockett
6-2, 245 lb., Fr.



Wide receiver
Antonio Veals
6-0, 185 lb., Fr.
28 - Alan Ogletree
6-1, 210 lb., Sr.



7-back
Jon Frazier
5-9, 180 lb., So.
15 - Cory Jessup
5-9, 190 lb., So.



Wingback
Brock Baker
5-8, 190 lb., Jr.
40 - Charles Thompson
6-1, 220 lb., Fr.



Fullback
Kevin Crisp
5-11, 210 lb., Jr.
41 - Chris Miller
6-0, 215 lb., Fr.



Quarterback
Jason Johnson
6-3, 200 lb., Jr.
7 - Donte Pimpton
6-2, 195 lb., Jr.



Running back
DeWayne Gallishaw
5-8, 190 lb., Sr.
23 - Keith Brooks
5-9, 215 lb., Jr.

- ◆ Name on top denotes probable starter
- ◆ Number on helmet indicates jersey number of starter
- ◆ Chart is subject to change

Brian Moore/Herald

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Gallishaw and Brooks needed to replace Smart

Tailback runs for 107 yards on 10 carries in Red-White scrimmage

By DANNY SCHOENBAECHLER
Herald reporter

The Hilltopper running game has some large and Smart shoes to fill.

The shoes of departed senior Rod Smart.

The responsibility of filling in for Smart — a tailback who produced 1,296 yards last season — has been laid upon the shoulders of DeWayne Gallishaw, a senior from Lakeland, Fla.

"DeWayne was a major contributor in the fall and spring and he has earned the spot," Coach Jack Harbaugh said.

The 5-8, 190-pound Gallishaw played in seven games last year at wingback, starting all of them, and now moves into the tailback position. Gallishaw ran for 224 yards on 38 carries last season.

"I am experienced," Gallishaw said. "And Coach told me that I read holes real good."

But Gallishaw won't have to reproduce all of Smart's yards by himself.

There will be two variables helping the cause.

One is Harbaugh said, is the slight difference in this year's offense, which will utilize the forward pass more.

Harbaugh said this lays more responsibility on the quarterback and his receivers.

But Gallishaw will also have backup Keith Brooks, a 5-9, 215-pound junior, to provide relief. Brooks, a transfer from Ohio University, totaled 134 rushing yards in his first two college seasons.

"We are ready to carry the load because me and Keith can

step in for each other," Gallishaw said. "I want to be one of the top rushers in the OVC."

He also wants to be a leader for Western's young offensive line.

"I can help keep them focused and in the game," Gallishaw said.

The unproven running game opens its final season in the Ohio Valley Conference Saturday against Tennessee-Martin, and it's players are eager to prove they can meet every challenge.

"I'm ready to step up and get things done," Gallishaw said.

White 20, Red 14

Last Friday's Red-White scrimmage, the team's final scrimmage before the season opens, ended in a 20-14 victory for the White squad.

Gallishaw, representing the Red team, ran for 107 yards on 10 carries, including a 59-yard scamper and a 3-yard touchdown.

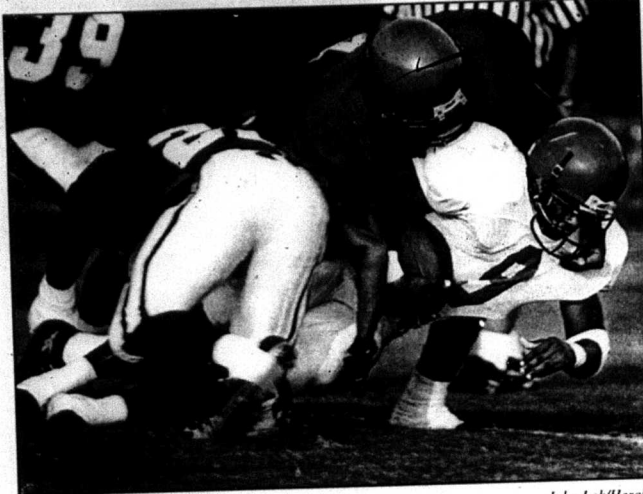
Brooks ran for 129 yards on 11 carries, highlighted by touchdown runs of 44 and 38 yards.

Junior Donte Pimpton, the White team's quarterback, completed all four of his passes for 188 yards and a touchdown.

Leading the Red squad, junior Jason Johnson completed 7 of 9 passes for 76 yards and a touchdown.

Playing the second half for the White team, sophomore Jason Michael completed 4 of 8 passes for 40 yards.

Junior wide receiver DeShun Walker had two catches for 76 yards and a score while freshman Antonio Veals had three catches for 25 yards and a touchdown.



John Lok/Herald

Senior running back DeWayne Gallishaw is brought down near the goal by Western's defense during the intrasquad scrimmage Friday at Smith Stadium.

Top in the Polls?

Western has been featured in several of the nation's pre-season polls, including The Sports Network, ESPN/USA Today and Sagarin's Computer Rankings. Here's how they measure up:

- ◆ The Sports Network: 41st
- ◆ ESPN/USA Today: 40th
- ◆ Sagarin: 34th
- ◆ Don Hansen's Weekly Football Gazette: unranked

Western opponents also ranked in a poll: Eastern, Elon, Murray, Tennessee State, Eastern Illinois, South Florida and Indiana State.

2000 WESTERN FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Sept. 9	Tennessee-Martin*	5 p.m.
Sept. 16	at Elon	1 p.m.
Sept. 23	at SE Missouri St.*	6 p.m.
Sept. 30	at Murray State*	6 p.m.
Oct. 7	Eastern Kentucky*	5 p.m.
Oct. 14	Tennessee Tech**	4 p.m.
Oct. 21	at Tennessee State	1:30 p.m.
Oct. 28	Eastern Illinois*	5 p.m.
Nov. 4	at South Florida	6 p.m.
Nov. 11	Indiana State	1 p.m.
Nov. 18	Southern Illinois	1 p.m.

* Denotes Ohio Valley Conference game

** Denotes Ohio Valley Conference game and Homecoming

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Experienced Hilltopper defense majors in chemistry

BY BRIAN MOORE
Herald reporter

Throughout Andy Hendel's five years as Western football's defensive coordinator, he's coached some quick defenses.

He's worked with strong secondaries.

He's seen teams with more chemistry than others.

Imagine his excitement this year. This team has all three.

"This is probably the most unique group I've had here, in that I've seen them since they were freshmen," Hendel said. "There are a lot of hard workers and talent, but it really doesn't mean anything unless you get going the right way. This year we have a group of guys that care about each other."

And, according to Hendel, all the talent and quickness in the world doesn't mean a thing if players don't care about one another and work together.

Seven starters return for the defense, and the overall picture on that side of the ball focuses on speed, unity and a strong, mobile defensive line.

Middle linebacker Melvin Wisham, a preseason All-American by The Sports Network, is the only senior projected to start for the defense in Saturday's opener with Tennessee-Martin.

But while players, coaches and those associated with the football program are beaming with excitement about what this defense can do, several questions remain unanswered.

Last year, Eastern Kentucky rang up 30 points against Western in their 20-point win. Southern Illinois pounded the Toppers 52-14 in the season finale.

Western went 1 for 12 on third-down conversions in that game compared to 9 of 13 on conversions by the Salukis.

Preventing big plays may be the only area in which the defense needs major improvement, Hendel said.

Junior strong safety Mel Mitchell, a returning starter, said more maturity and the chemistry of this unit is what sets it apart from last year.

Sophomore strong safety Bobby Sippio's eligibility also poses questions. Sippio will not play Saturday. He was suspended three weeks ago by head coach Jack Harbaugh for at least the first game for "conduct and attitude" unbecoming a Western football player.

Sippio said his "head got kind of big" after quickly becoming a defensive star last year as a true freshman. That evolved into a bad attitude and a negative image, he said.

Last season Sippio had four interceptions, two of which he ran back for touchdowns. He made 75 tackles and earned All-OVC first-team honors.

While Harbaugh would not comment on Sippio's current status, Hendel said the strong safety has continued to play well in practice. It's important for Sippio as an

individual to regain his game eligibility, Hendel said.

"He's been very positive. I haven't seen anything but positive things from him lately and he's been great in practice," Hendel said.

Sippio's teammates are equally supportive and hope that he'll make a comeback.

"We need to get him back as soon as possible," Mitchell said. "If we don't, life goes on, but the sooner we get him back the better off we'll be."

The Hilltopper backfield is lightning-quick. At cornerback is junior Joseph Jefferson, a three-year starter from Logan County High School. Jefferson also returned 10 kickoffs for an average of 20.7 yards.

At the other corner will be Indianapolis freshman Jeremy Chandler.

Juniors Kyle Moffatt and Mitchell will be the safeties, but Moffatt could move if and when Sippio rejoins the team.

"We're looking very, very, very nice," Sippio said, smiling. "We're looking a lot better than we did last year. We've got a lot more enthusiasm and a lot more experience."

"We've learned the differences in each other and how each other plays. We've learned to combine our talent with their's and put it all together."

Junior Sherrod Coates and sophomore Jon Drummond will join Wisham at linebacker. Coates, a returning starter, made 71 tackles last season, including eight for a loss. Drummond played in eight games and won the starting job during spring practice.

On the defensive front line will be three juniors — Randall Johnson, Arthur Wilson and Rocco Dibenedetto — and sophomore Patrick Reynolds. The four average height of 6-2 and a weight of 255 pounds.

But ask any member of the Hilltopper backfield what impresses them about the men up front and they'll tell you the line isn't much different from the secondary.

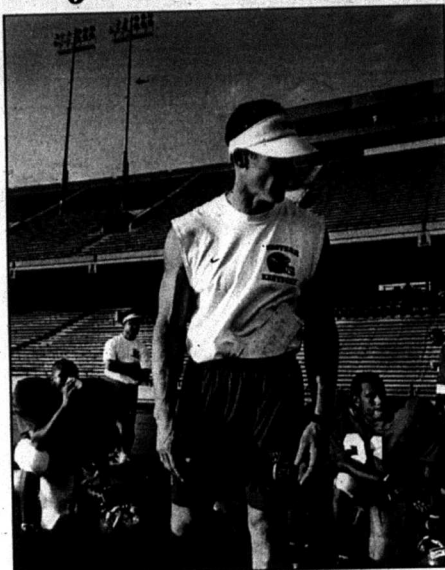
"Speed — that's a big difference from last year," Jefferson said. "Our linebacker core is really fast. The whole defense is fast, and that's not excluding the two, three-hundred-pound guys up front. It's amazing, really."

And, thanks to Western's offense, the defense has improved its pass coverage, Hendel said. Harbaugh and first-year offensive coordinator Bill Mottola have initiated more of a passing offense to ease the pressure on its traditional running and option attack.

On some occasions in preseason practice, the offense has lined up with three wide outs. Two receiver sets have been more common, and that has allowed the defense to practice against the pass much more than in previous years.

The first two teams on the schedule — Tennessee-Martin and Elon — will launch option offenses against the Western defense. But after those games, Hendel said his crew will be ready for air raids.

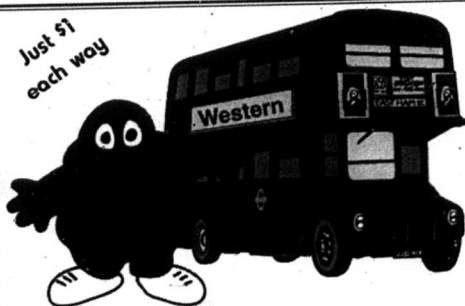
"It really benefits the defense to see all the passing in camp," Hendel said. "We haven't seen everything, but at least they're passing."



John Lok/Herald

Western defensive coordinator Andy Hendel, center, reviews strategy with players during halftime of last Friday's intrasquad scrimmage at Smith Stadium.

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Offense to pass ball more this season, will still run option

Johnson completes 7 of 9 passes
in scrimmage, named starting quarterback

BY KYLE HIGHTOWER
Herald reporter

When Western's offensive unit takes the field for its first series against Tennessee-Martin Saturday, don't expect them to be in any hurry.

Don't expect them to make quick decisions in the huddle, and don't expect them to get jittery at the line of scrimmage.

This year's Toppers want to be disciplined.

This year's Topper offense wants to be savvy in all its decisions. And above all things, this year's Toppers want to be patient.

Those are the hopes of Coach Jack Harbaugh and offensive coordinator Bill Mottola, anyway.

For years, skilled athletes, the option and an all-around power rushing attack have characterized Western football. And for years, Western football enthusiasts have criticized Hilltopper coaches for not taking to the air more.

Harbaugh and Mottola want to change that stigma.

Both Harbaugh and Mottola agree that throwing the football a few more times a game wouldn't hurt.

Last season, the Hilltoppers attempted only 64 passes; on two occasions, against Eastern Kentucky and Southeast Missouri, they failed to complete even one.

With two proven passers in junior college transfer Jason Johnson and Jason Michael, who is Western's leading returning passer after starting nine games in the place of an injured Donte Pimpleton, the quarterback position could be Western's deepest.

It would appear, at least if preseason workouts and scrimmages are any indication, that Johnson and Pimpleton, both juniors, will see the majority of the snaps.

Johnson will get the starting nod Saturday — penciled in by the Western staff Tuesday.

"I'm not a great guy for shuffling quarterbacks," Harbaugh said. "I think you go with the guy that has earned the spot and he plays until he demonstrates he can't play or he gets injured."

Though Johnson has been named the starter, Harbaugh says that doesn't eliminate the need to have a stable of other capable quarterbacks.

"In this offense over the course of 11 games, you may need two and possibly three quarterbacks to get us through this season, and what a great feeling to have, knowing we have three guys we like very much," he said.

But before the Hilltoppers can throw the ball, the offensive line must be on the same page. Accustomed to a pull-and-power approach to blocking, the line has had to embrace a new approach to blocking and pass protection.

Mottola and Harbaugh are

pleased with the strides they have made in the preseason, but would like them to progress a little farther.

Harbaugh said having an underclassmen line, which will possibly feature three freshmen, is comforting because it will allow them to grow.

On the left side, freshman Daniel Withrow should be the man at tackle and junior Chris Price the starter at guard. Joe Guinan, also a junior, should start at the center position and sophomore Derek Forster and junior Marcus Caldwell will be the right guard and tackle.

"We've spent more time on pass protection — they've done a great job, they've picked it up and understand it's an emphasis if this offense is going to throw the ball more," Mottola said. "If you can't protect it, then it doesn't matter who's throwing it or if anybody can get open."

"To improve our passing game, it's going to take all 11 positions to improve," Mottola said. "The offensive line has to protect better, backs have to run better routes, quarterback has to be able to throw to the right guys and read better — it's not just throwing and catching."

Harbaugh said the develop-

"We've developed some new formations and motions and things ... so that we can still run the option and the running game but also be able to throw the ball out of it."

— Bill Mottola

Western offensive coordinator

ment of the line won't restrict the passing game.

"I think if we allow that to happen then we are kind of giving in a little bit," Harbaugh said. "I know our coaches and I don't think if we go into the first game and we get an incomplete pass, we can't just say forget it and go back to running the ball and pounding it."

"I've got to really discipline myself and our coaches to be patient with this and not give up too early."

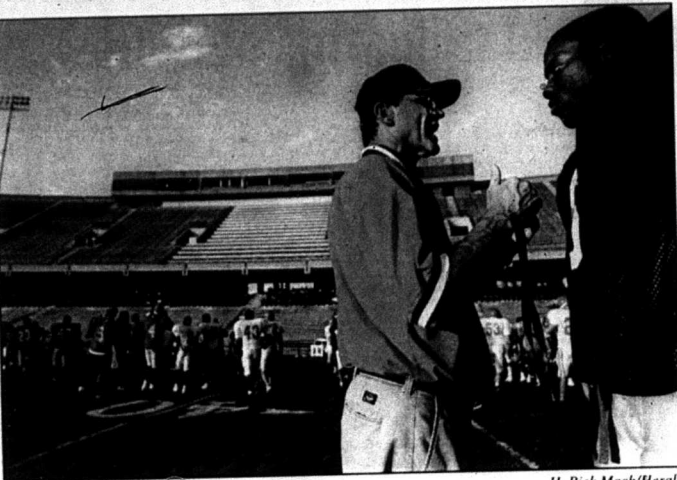
On the same token, Mottola was quick to point out the addition of a few more passes per game won't completely alter what fans have come to know as traditional Western football.

"Our basic fundamental philosophy will be to establish the running game — that hasn't changed," Mottola said. "We've developed some new formations and motions and things like that so we can still run the option and the running game but also be able to throw the ball out of it."

He said he hopes a more potent pass attack will allow the Toppers to do more things with the ball.

"We are still trying to run the same basic style of offense but are going to try and throw it more, make defenses defend more of the field, instead of just tackle to tackle or just option," Mottola said. "We want to threaten the depth of the field as well."

"We haven't completely overhauled the offense or



H. Rick Much/Herald

Western coach Jack Harbaugh talks to junior quarterback Jason Johnson during halftime of last Friday's Red and White scrimmage. Harbaugh likes having three quarterbacks, a situation he feels could be necessary for the offense over the course of 11 games.

thrown anything away, we are just trying to expand it more."

The anchor of the Hilltopper rushing game appears to be senior tailback DeWayne Gallishaw. Gallishaw had a strong outing in the Hilltoppers' preseason scrimmage and the coaching staff is pleased with his progression during workouts.

"Gallishaw will be our starter," Harbaugh said. "Coming out of spring practice he was definitely No. 1 and I think his play in the fall has solidified that."

Harbaugh was also impressed with the play of sophomore Jonathan Frazier.

"We put him in toward the end of the scrimmage and he did some good things — he made some people miss and though he's not a big guy, he stepped up in there and really did some good things."

On the receiving end, expect seniors Alan Ogletree and Leroy Littles to see a lot of clock, along with an onslaught of newcomers.

"We like Ogletree and we like Littles," Harbaugh said.

"We decided we needed to do a better recruiting job, so we went out and recruited four."

Harbaugh said freshmen Antonio Veals out of Louisville and Jerrome Reeves, from Florida, are high on the depth chart.

"Both of them have really done some good things and stayed healthy," he said. "Their play over the past 10 days have put them in competition for some playing time."

The bottom line appears to be that Western will still play hard-nosed Western football, but the average eye will be able to notice some changes.

"We don't want to give the impression that we are going to come out and throw it all over the lot," Mottola said. "We are going to throw it more than we have, but we are not going to throw it just to throw it."

"We don't want to come in here Sunday and say we threw it 40 times, but we got our butts kicked. Our No. 1 goal is to win football games."

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Follow Hilltopper football every Tuesday and Thursday in the **Herald**.

Toppertown an alternative to usual tailgating activities

By CHAD QUEEN
Herald reporter

Three things are synonymous with tailgating: good food, great beer and an even better atmosphere. Hilltopper fans will be able to experience them all this year as another football season is set to get underway.

While the university policy on drinking is unclear, the other aspects are well intact for this season. Live music will once again be provided, giving fans the enjoyment of relaxing and just listening to the jam session in progress.

But this year will be different than previous years in a big way. This season, fans will be introduced to Toppertown, an event coinciding with pregame and post-game activities.

"Toppertown will have dozens of interactive opportunities for fans young and old," Athletics Director Wood Selig said.

Fans will have the option of taking a break from their normal festivities to do anything from a bungee-cord run to strapping on a velcro suit and leaping at a giant wall. Other activities include passing contests, face

painting and timed sprints. "I would definitely be interested in going," said Ron Fishback, a freshman from Naperville, Ill. "People like to be interactive. Anything that can give you that experience is cool to me."

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Toppertown comes at a time when the school is in desperate need to raise attendance and interest in the upcoming football season. The hope of attracting a new audience is the reason behind the program, Selig said. This is a way for families to enjoy an experience many could only have when going to a professional football game.

One concern, however, would be the mixing of students with area families.

"It has its pros and cons," Owensboro sophomore Robert Smith said. "It's good for families, but I can't see students get-

ting into it."

But students like Owensboro sophomore Jill Goltry disagree. "I would totally do it," Goltry said.

Selig does not anticipate the combination of parents and college students as a problem, citing the immense number of activities to keep everyone happy.

Greg Huguley of Scottsburg, Ind., a father of one, agrees.

"Activities like this would make the whole thing better," Huguley said.

Because of a lack of advertising dollars, most will not hear of Toppertown until game day arrives, Selig said. It will be an all day affair, taking place three hours before and after each Hilltopper home football game at the practice field next to Smith Stadium.

Whether you want to dress in full Hilltopper football attire for a picture or run a giant maze, organizers say Toppertown has something for everyone. Anyone with a student ID or a game ticket can enjoy all that Toppertown has to offer, Selig said.

"This is a nice alternative to sitting at a tailgating party and just listening to music," he said.

Did you know?

Western's football team has made it to the post-season seven times in its history:

- 1952: The Refrigerator Bowl (Evansville, Ind.)
- Western 34, Arkansas State 19
- 1963: Tangerine Bowl (Orlando, Fla.)
- Western 27, Coast Guard Academy 0
- 1973: NCAA Division II Playoffs. Western loses to Le Tech 34-0 in championship game, finishes season as national runners-up.

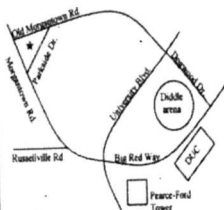
- 1975: NCAA Division II Playoffs. Western loses to Northern Michigan 16-14 in championship game, finishes season as national runners-up.
- 1987: NCAA Division I-AA Playoffs. Loses to Eastern Ky. in first round of playoffs 40-17.
- 1988: NCAA Division I-AA Playoffs. Loses to Eastern Ky. in second round of playoffs 41-24.
- 1997: NCAA Division I-AA Playoffs. Loses to Eastern Washington in second round of playoffs 38-21. (Note: Western did defeat Eastern Ky. 42-14 in first round).

Good Luck Toppers!

from the *College Heights* **Herald**

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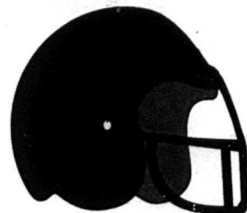
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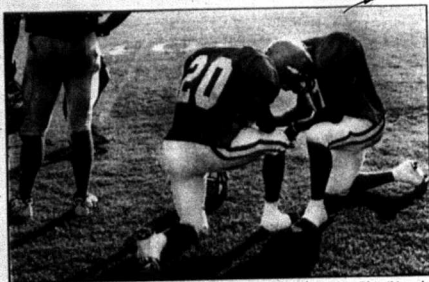
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THE GATE'S EDGE

Freshman free safety Cris Riviere, left, returns this season following an injury, while Bobby Sippio will return after a one-game suspension.



Cassandra Shie/Herald

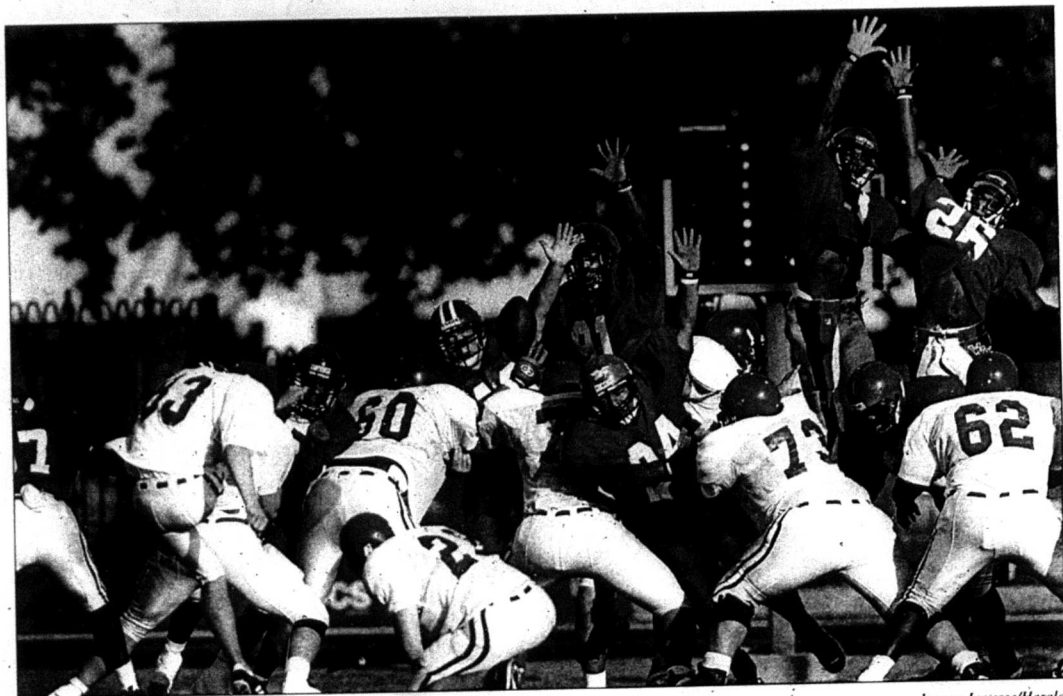


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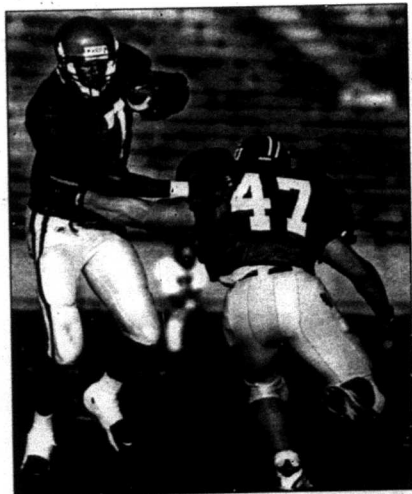
H. Rick Mach/Herald

Center: Freshman quarterback Jeremy Chandler, left, and freshman defensive back Antwon Pinkston pray before Friday's scrimmage.
Right: Jack Harbaugh begins his 12th season at Western, coming off four straight winning seasons.



Jeremy Lyverse/Herald

Western's red team attempts to block a Josh Recktenwald field goal Friday afternoon at Smith Stadium. White went on to win 20-14.



John Lok/Herald

Junior quarterback Donte Pimpleton works his way past freshman linebacker Michael Keck on Friday.



Jeremy Lyverse/Herald

Junior running back Keith Brooks stretches out during halftime of Friday's scrimmage. Brooks led all running backs for the game with 129 yards on 11 carries and two touchdowns.

“Off the field, we're one big group. It's like big team, little meeting. That's how I look at it. I feel like everybody's out here to have fun, and that's what we're doing.”

BOBBY SIPPIO, SOPHOMORE FREE SAFETY

Playing in the big league: Hilltoppers on their way

MY APARTMENT. BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — Last night Western upset defending national champion Michigan State 101-85 to claim the school's first men's basketball national championship.

Joe Harney had 55 points.

All this happened in my apartment, during my two-hour class break between French dictation and national government, thanks to Nintendo 64's Fox Sports College Basketball video game.

Western hasn't played powerhouses, except for an occasional trip to the NCAA men's basketball tournament or a world title defense by the forensic team.

And before this season, there was no way Western would step on a football field with a well-known name, not even on N64, which offers a plethora of teams.

There's a simple reason for Dennis Felton's inclusion and Harbaugh's exclusion.

Western basketball is on the national level. Western football is not.

Not yet.

This time next year Western will travel to Wisconsin, well known for dairy products and Roan Dayne.

The guys they have there look like refrigerators and create holes in defensive lines big enough to drive ice cream



PLAYGROUND NOTES

John Darr

trucks through.

That's how someone like Dayne breaks records.

But Harbaugh said his biggest worry these days is getting out of bed, and he hasn't begun to think about the Badgers.

Realistically, this season is a series of scrimmages that build to Wisconsin and the chance to do something incredible on a national level.

And once we make it to the big show, the video game guys will need some help rating our players. The video gods do this so people unfamiliar with a team know what to expect.

And the average student may want to know how good Western is now in comparison to Wisconsin.

That's two good reasons to offer a preliminary rating system for this season in a way everyone should be able to understand.

REPORT CARD

Quarterbacks

Wisconsin — B (it's not hard to hand the ball off)
Western — B-

Running Backs

Wisconsin — A+ (Even the guy in Dayne's shadow is big)
Western — B (Harbaugh's most experienced players)

Wide Receivers

Wisconsin — B (11 pass attempts compared to 57 rushes last week)
Western — C (hands are talented but inconsistent)

Offensive Line

Wisconsin — You kidding me?
Western — C (young and unproven)

Pass Defense

Wisconsin — C (gave up 243 yards last week)
Western — B (Harbaugh said this is where he's strongest)

Run Defense

Wisconsin — A-
Western — B-

TOPPERS: Western goes for OVC title at gate's edge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Part of this year's focus is a new offensive game plan designed to ease the pressure on Harbaugh's traditional option offense. First year offensive coordinator Bill Mottola and Harbaugh have initiated a passing attack that could use formations with up to three wide outs.

The idea is that more passing will prevent opposing defenses from jamming the middle and stuffing the option and running game. The preseason passing has also helped the defense improve its pass coverage.

In previous years, the defense saw a good deal of option offense and not much passing. Now, it's been able to hone its skills against both, defensive coordinator Andy Hendel said.

Among the challenges of the last four weeks, as usual, has been the heat. Temperatures have swelled into the mid-90s several days and humidity has launched the heat index into the 100s.

Under a helmet and layers of pads, players get hot — extremely hot. So what's the motivation to keep 100 guys moving toward a common goal?

"You're investing your time, you're not spending it," Harbaugh said. "Some people say, 'I'm spending my time going to class.' You really aren't. You're investing it."

"When you're out in practice for two hours, you're not spending it. You're investing it in the future, knowing that there may be a time down the road when that investment will pay off for you."

And what is expected to be an exceptionally strong defense hopes the investment will pay off against teams like Eastern Kentucky, and Southern Illinois. Last year, the Colonels pounded out 30 points and the Salukis tallied 52 in wins over Western.

"For me, I've just got to think about what they did to us last year," Sippio said. "They can go out and score 62 as long as we've got 72. It doesn't matter. It's all about the W."

And Western hopes it can

package together as many wins as possible to show the OVC it is a formidable member.

Harbaugh's teams have put up four consecutive winning seasons, but this attempt is somewhat different — it's a shot at an OVC title at the gate's edge.

"I think we're much better than fourth and we've got to go out and show that," said Melvin Wisham, a preseason All-American linebacker.

"We could easily win it."

Get Geared up for the Hilltoppers' 2000 football season!



Go Toppers!



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